

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL  
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS  
AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER  
LOWELL FOLKLIFE PROJECT**

INFORMANT: GABRIELA OLIVEIRA  
CONDUCTED BY: BARBARA FERTIG

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 1987

G = GABRIELA  
B = BARBARA

LFP-BF-A004

B: Uh, start out if you would by telling me where you were born?

G: Okay, I was born in Portugal in one of the Azorean Islands. [Laughter]

B: Uhhuh, which island?

G: Peku.

B: Peku.

G: Yeah

B: Actually, I've never met anybody from Peku before. And when did you come here?

G: When I was six.

B: So you came with your parents?

G: Uhhuh, and my brother.

B: And your brother

G: Uhhuh.

B: And why did you come here? Why did the family decide to come here?

G: For a lot of different reasons. One of which was um, my father's health. He didn't do too well in the islands. He needed a different type of climate. Another reason was for I guess an economic opportunity. There was much there in Portugal. That's about, those are the two main reasons. And work to provide education for the children.

B: Did you come straight to Lowell?

G: Yes we did.

B: You had family here?

G: We had an uncle here. Yeah.

B: Um, so you were educated completely in the Lowell school system?

G: Completely, uhuh.

B: And talk English just like one of us [Laughter], but also talk Portuguese just fine. So Portuguese must be spoken in your family?

G: Yes. Uhuh.

B: And how did you get involved in LUPA?

G: Through the family. My brother was involved and my father was involved with it too. So I just kind of happened upon it too.

B: Tell me what involvement with LUPA is? Umm.

G: Okay. It provides a transition for the newcomers in, the Portuguese newcomers into the area [noise in background] [B: Uhuh]. A lot of times they come into the area and they don't know where to go. Like for instance medical appointments, or um, they just don't, they're not familiar with the area and its resources and we provide that. [B: Uhuh]. A lot of times Mary, the Social Worker, she'll take them to the doctor's and translate for them, and get them hooked up with the services in the area.

B: Uhuh, uhuh. Um, so it's any kind of social service at all that, that people need.

G: Uhuh, yeah. Especially like when they come from Portugal, they don't know the language. And a lot of them are older too, and it is hard for them to develop the language.

B: Sure.

G: And Mary provides that service for them. She gets them hooked up with the area services. And she'll go to the schools and get the children enrolled, and help them get enrolled and provide the basis for that.

B: Um, do you also do anything about helping people find jobs?

G: Yup, she'll, she will go with um, some of the people, the clients and maybe help them fill out an application and do things like that.

B: Now um, Mary is the one I've met her, I guess.

G: Uhhuh.

B: When she isn't here do other people fill in for her? It sounds like they're, you must be very busy.

G: It's busy, but um, right now we have another part time person too. We are trying to get her um, back into the job. She was away for awhile, so.

B: Did LUPA help your family when you came here?

G: No, it wasn't open then.

B: Oh, it's happened since then.

G: Yeah.

B: Is your father then one of the organizers of it?

G: No he is not.

B: Oh.

G: He just, he uh, became involved in the thing about four years ago.

B: Uhhuh. Can you tell me who did organize it?

G: I am not really sure.

B: Uhhuh.

G: Mary probably could tell you, but I really, I'm really not sure.

B: And you're the president?

G: Right now I am the acting president. [B: You're the acting president] we don't have a president. I am really the treasurer.

B: Do you have a Board of Directors?

G: Yes, we do.

B: And um, do they have regular meetings.

G: Yeah, we have them usually about once every six weeks or so.

B: Uhhuh, and I suppose you have to raise funds.

G: Yeah. A lot of times we have festivals and raise some funds, but that doesn't, that doesn't help out a lot. So we have to go through the grants and stuff and write up proposals and (--)

B: To the State?

G: To the State.

B: And to Federal?

G: No, right now we have the State.

B: Father Silva tells me that the festival of St. John is sponsored by LUPA, can you tell me a bit about the festival?

G: Umm.

B: Well start out by telling me [sigh] um, whether that takes place also in the Azores, or in Portugal.

G: I suppose it does. [laughs]

B: Yeah.

G: It does but uh, I'm not too familiar with that aspects of it.

B: Uhhuh, uhhuh.

G: Yeah we have that every year here and the Board of Directors, we um, we organize it, and it is a very lengthy process.

B: Uhhuh. [background noise]

G: Basically we have a lot of booths. A lot of um, we sell a lot of food and wine and beer, and we have a bazaar. I don't know if you are familiar with that.

B: No. Where do hold this?

G: At the St. Anthony's Church parking lot.

B: Oh you do?

G: Yeah we usually have bands there and (--)

B: Is there a procession?

G: There is, yup. It's usually a three-day activity.

B: Oh.

G: So, like Friday night, Saturday and Sunday, and Sunday is the usually the procession.

B: And um, at other times are there band concerts, concerts of different sorts I mean.?

G: Well we have that at the festival too.

B: That's what I meant. That what's I meant, at the festival.

G: And there is dancing. Usually at night the band will come in and they'll dance.

B: Uhhuh.

G: Yeah.

B: And do, does the local Lowell Portuguese band also participate in that?

G: The marching band?

B: The marching band. Yeah.

G: Yeah, they do.

B: Do you know who the director is of that.

G: Actually, um, Louis Gomes?

B: Louis Gomes.

G: Yeah.

B: Oh good. I think that I am seeing him. So that's fine.  
Um, is there, is there a statue of St. John's in, at, of St. John in the church?

G: Actually, I don't think so, no.

B: No.

B: Um, do you, does the celebration of the festival fall on the saints day, or near it.

G: Near it. It's usually, we have it in June. So usually we try to get it close by on a weekend.

B: Uhhuh.

G: Yeah. [sound of door closing]

B: And that contributes some amount to the to LUPA's treasury,  
but it also is good public relations?

G: Yeah, it's good public relations. It gets the folks out there in the community. It's really a very festive atmosphere.

B: And do people, are there Portuguese people who find out about LUPA that way? How do people usually find out about you.

G: Uh, word of mouth. Word of mouth, yeah. It's, it's basically just the elderly that we help out, because they don't have a lot of the um, families. They have their children that will help them to translate, or do some outreach, but a lot of these elderly, elderly people don't have that so they come to LUPA.

B: Uh huh.

B: Um, are most of your people here in back Central then?

G: Yeah, yeah.

B: So it's, it's very much a community organization.

G: Very.

B: Uh, oh you should tell me who your other officers are I guess.

G: Okay. Right now you know, we are short of some officers. [laughter]

B: Yes, uh huh.

G: Um, basically it's Manuel Martiano, and Tony Costa. We recently had a few resign. So right now we're lacking directors.

B: Uh huh.

G: We are trying to do some outreach to get some too. And that's difficult because it's a voluntary directorship, or whatever.

B: Uh huh.

G: So it's hard to get people involved.

B: And um, do the, do the people who run LUPA also live here in back Central.

G: No, I live in ah, Chelmsford.

B: So you have to commute into everything that you do here?

G: Uhhuh.

G: One of the other um, directors is Mr. Oblinu Medina. I think that is for now. Basically it's not many, we are only four of us now running it. So it's kinda difficult.

B: Let me, let me just, if you don't mind switching topics, I would really love to know about what traditions are important to your family. Are there things, do you know are there traditional foods that are important to you, or ways of celebrating Christmas, or other holidays.

G: Well Christmas is pretty special to us. We celebrate everything basically on Christmas Eve.

B: Uh huh.

G: We'll have the family over and just gather around. And our friends will come over and just celebrate, talk and eat and have a nice time. And then we'll go to the midnight mass. That's pretty traditional. [laughter] And then we'll come back and open up all the gifts and stay up till like five or six in the morning. And then basically sleep the rest of the day. [laughter]

B: Are there special foods that you have when you have people over on Christmas Eve?

G: Well actually my mother, it's tradition to have cod fish on Christmas Eve, and we have that. Basically, I really don't like it but (--) [laughter]

B: Uh, I see [both talking at once and laughing]

B: How is it fixed?

G: I really couldn't tell you.

B: Uh huh.

G: My mother does that.

B: Is it fresh cod or salty cod.

G: Yeah, yeah.

B: Um, do you have any favorite Portuguese foods?

G: [pause 5 sec.] I'm probably the worst person to interview because, not really. [laughter]

B: Do you have any favorite American foods?

G: Yeah, yeah, actually I love seafood. So that's, I guess, Portuguese too.

B: Uh huh, I guess it is. Yeah.

B: Okay is there anything else that I didn't ask about LUPA that I should have asked?

G: Not that I can think of. Basically we um, we help about seventy people a month. That's important to know.

B: Yeah I guess it is.

G: Uhhuh. It's usually like the same. They have people who usually come back too.

B: Are some people necessarily just dependent upon you to, on a continuing basis?

G: Some are. Yes some are, because they, like I said, are elderl..elders. So

B: Uh huh.

G: They tend to use it as their main resource.

B: And then younger people would come to you to do things like get their kids into school and so forth.

G: Yeah, and basically, that basically a one-time service with like the younger.

B: Right. And then they (--)

G: Once you get them hooked up with the services they are all set, but it's the elderly that we have, we keep assisting.

B: Uh huh, uh huh.

G: Because they really don't have anybody else to help them. So.

B: Do, are they, are they fairly comfortable among a network of friends here in back Central, or are they kind of isolated, family by family, these older people who you help.

G: Um, there is a mixture.

B: Ah.

G: Yeah, some are isolated. Others have like a close network, but then again there all usually the same age. So they tend to rely on LUPA.

B: Uh huh. And I guess I should ask you too among the people who come to you who are, who are very newly immigrated um, are they mostly coming from the mainland, from the Azores, or from Madeira?

G: Um, basically mostly from the Azores.

B: I think we've locked John out.

B: Linguisa.

G: Basically she just fries it up. It keeps the flavor in it.

B: Uh huh. So most, does she add it to soups and things like that?

G: No.

B: No.

G: No, no she doesn't. Gata [sounds like] I guess, is the other um, Portuguese sausage, it's gata called shoorisu [sounds like] and that's what they uh use in their soups and uh.

B: Oh that's it. Okay.

B: And what kind of cheese, are there Portuguese cheeses? I don't know anything about them.

G: Yeah, there is one that's called, well it's from St. George's Island, and that's really a spicy cheese.

B: Uh huh. Spicy?

G: Well, sharp, it's really and it's delicious. We have other milk cheeses too, which is nice too.

B: Uh huh, uh huh. I noticed a cheese down at Martin's Fish and Produce that looks like, I mean it's a white cheese, looks like a cream cheese, is that what it is?

G: Yeah, that's, yeah, it's like a cream cheese.

B: Yeah.

G: It's a little, its saltier and it's delicious.

B: Umm.

B: Okay. Jack are you finished?

J: Nope, almost though, very close.

B: [laughter] Well turn us loose please.

J: I just want to confirm the exposure here that's all.

B: Oh all right, okay

B: Well, I let Gabriella off the hook.